

Bipolar

Bipolar disorder is a behavioral health disorder that causes unusual shifts in mood, energy, and activity levels, making it difficult to perform every day tasks. The moods range from low depressive episodes to high, manic episodes. Bipolar was previously known as manic depression.

There are four types of bipolar disorder, depending on the way someone's moods cycle and the severity of the episodes that they experience. One person's experience with bipolar could be significantly different from another's. See below for more information about each type of bipolar disorder.

Signs of Bipolar Include:

- Feeling high, elated, and filled with energy
- Having racing thoughts & talking very fast
- Being agitated, irritated or touchy
- Doing risky things like spending large sums of money or having reckless sex
- Feeling very sad, down, or hopeless
- Having very little energy
- Having trouble sleeping
- Thinking about death or suicide

Types of Bipolar Disorder

- **Bipolar I disorder** is characterized by experiencing one or more episodes of mania. An individual must have a manic episode that lasts at least a week or is serious enough to warrant hospitalization to be diagnosed with bipolar I. Many people who have bipolar I experience a depressive episode, but not always.
- **Bipolar II disorder** is defined by someone who experiences depressive and hypomanic periods but has never experienced what would be considered a full manic episode.
- **Cyclothymic disorder or cyclothymia** is defined by experiencing chronically unstable moods where the individual experiences hypomania and mild depression for at least two years. There may be periods of normal moods, but they last less than two months.
- **Bipolar disorder "other specified" or "unspecified"** is when a person experiences symptoms of hypomania, mania or depressive episodes but doesn't fit exactly into the other categories.

Treatment Can Help

How is Bipolar disorder treated? First, talk to your clinician/doctor about your symptoms. Bipolar disorder is complicated and can be experienced differently across individuals. During the course of bipolar illness, a person might experience only one episode of mania alternating with a depressive episode, or numerous periods of mood swings and mania over the course of their lifetime. It is important that your doctor conducts a complete evaluation to determine the correct diagnosis. If you are experiencing Bipolar illness, your doctor will refer you to a mental health specialist. Bipolar disorders are generally treated with medication and therapy.

Psychotherapy

A type of psychotherapy called cognitive behavior therapy (CBT) is useful for treating Bipolar illness. CBT teaches different ways of thinking, behaving, and reacting to situations. Improved coping skills are one major outcome of CBT. Interpersonal therapy can also be useful in helping individuals manage the impact of their moods on social interactions, decrease relationship strain and encourage consistency in treatment.

Medication

Medication has been found to be a highly effective part of treatment for Bipolar illness. Any decision regarding the use of medication should be made with your doctor. Talk with your doctor about the best treatment for you.

Resources

Anxiety and Depression Association of America: adaa.org

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, available 24 hours everyday: 1-800-273-8255

National Alliance on Mental Illness: www.nami.org/Learn-More/Mental-Health-Conditions/Anxiety-Disorders